

5: Lab/Branch Chiefs  
from: Dr. Korn

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Jella H. [unclear]

Courtesy of Jack Crowley, MIT

**THERE ARE MANY LESSONS TO BE LEARNED HERE:**

At noon 13 March Hon. John E. Porter, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, an ardent proponent of biomedical research, gave a rallying speech to Research!America on this subject.

Rep Porter said:

What worked in FY 1996 won't be enough in FY 1997. Last year, not many know this, I called about ten university presidents (he named several institutions). All graciously agreed to energize their boards. We will do that again this year - more broadly. We must balance the budget, make the government more efficient, program by program. However, "there is no more vital endeavor" for government than NIH. How do we make this contagious? I need your help. The American people must make it a priority. You must do this. Infect the >people with the needs. Three targets in Congress:

1. John Kasich and the members of the H Budget Committee. The House Budget Resolution may be on the House Floor in mid-April.
2. Bob Livingston and the House Appropriations Committee. Markups will occur in mid-May.
3. Every Member of the House and Senate.

Set meetings in each District. Visit the Members in their local offices. Tell them what NIH means to them personally in their home districts. We need to do this because even some in the leadership don't understand. One leader in the House (not the Speaker) said, "why do we need NIH? Research is being done in all of our universities."

We have to make the argument that in both sectors (universities and industry) we lead the world. It is the most efficient government spending of all. It makes longer, more healthy lives across the country and around the world. It provides for greater economic growth, more exports, more high technology jobs. We must get this message out to Congress, to newspapers, to local media and to the people. Speak at local community organizations. Urge others to write to their Congressman. I believe in the firepower theory of lobbying. If you fire enough bullets you will hit some targets. Research!America's suggested actions are right. They do make a difference. Popularize Research and what it does for our society.

We cannot forget last year. The House Budget Committee began with a 5% cut which translated to a 25% cut on a static base over 7 years. The Senate then suggested a 10% cut. God bless Mark Hatfield who turned it around. However, he's retiring. The Senate

provided only a 2.7% increase and then did not pass the bill. We may be looking at something similar again. Such cuts would be disaster. Awards would drop. Talented minds will move to other fields.

We can provide a 6.5% increase for NIH this year if we all work aggressively in the home districts and home groups. We can accomplish it!

**Response to questions:**

1. Citizens against Government Waste challenged NIH as foolish government spending. Sam Donaldson helped there by saying that such spending may appear foolish at first blush but it is good science. I am particularly worried now. Not many items in the FY '96 bill got funded like NIH. There are 800 line items in the bill. All of the others will target NIH arguing that it is not fair to cut them in order to fund NIH. But it is not a matter of fairness. It is a matter of priorities and of where the dollars should be spent. What the Senate did yesterday (adding funds for several programs, including education) won't help next year because there will not be the money to sustain those increases. We need to be careful that the NIH is not targeted. Last year I took all 5 new members of the subcommittee to NIH for a day and then asked Dr. Varmus to bring a group of Nobel laureates before the Subcommittee. This year I'm taking our spouses with us to NIH. I called ten university presidents; this year we want to call 100! I want to reach every single university president. There is nothing more important than having the president of the local university come into the Member's office and tell him that this is something important. Also, look ahead to the fall elections. Ask the local candidates what they think about this issue. But talk with them ahead of time so that they give the right answer. If you do that the Member or candidate learns and then those in the room hear the right answer. And, do not forget the President and the Secretary of DHHS. They need to be lobbied. It will be much tougher, much tougher this year.

2. A national trust fund for research? We ought to look at long-term solutions. Obviously, there was no peace dividend. With dropping award rates a 6.5% increase for NIH is minimal. We need to do much much better in the future. Senators Harkin and Hatfield have raised the question of a trust fund. Tobacco is a wonderful idea. But, we will raise NO taxes. Maybe we can dedicate a percentage of existing taxes on tobacco to biomedical research. But don't get off the appropriations fight until it has run its course! Last year's 5.7% increase was about the cost of one B-2 bomber. We don't need more SeaWolf submarines. And, we do not need a tax cut either! (Which does not make me popular within my party!) And, do not make predictions of cuts in research. Do not accept cuts! The Speaker said that he would review not only biomedical research and NIH but all federally funded research - and he did. But not much changed. Make appointments to see the Speaker and make the case for all government research. Republicans ought to support all research

because it is essential to grow our economy, to jobs and to sustaining our high standard of living. We must not lose our technological lead. We must chose our priorities.